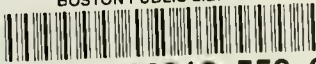


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Boston Redevelopment Authority
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PROJECT
June, 1963
Planning Report #4

OFFICE PCTENTIAL

This report is one of a series being prepared by the Boston Redevelopment Authority staff to explore and summarize various elements of the CBD planning work during the Survey and Planning period. It is to be used for analysis by the BRA, CCBD, Victor Gruen Associates and other CBD consultants as designated by the BRA. The report is subject to additions, alterations and deletions during the planning process. It is to be used during the planning of the CBD project as a synthesis of the known facts and planning ideas to date, and is not as a policy statement.

OFFICE POTENTIAL IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to bring together and analyze all information dealing with the potential for office development in the Central Business District. The objective will be to develop a preliminary appraisal of possible areas or sites for this development and to investigate in a general way the potential for investment in this category of real estate.

The discussion of office use in the Central Business District will be covered in two steps. The first will be an analysis by areas of existing types of office use and the general condition and quality of office space in the Central Business District. The second step will comprise an identification of potential office areas in the vicinity of the retail core with a brief discussion of possible investors in office space in these potential areas. Attention will be given to the relationship of this potential office development to adjacent non-office uses.

II. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING OFFICE SPACE (See Map I - Existing Office Areas)

There are three major office areas in the federal Business District. They are the Devonshire-Congress-Federal Streets Area which makes up the western segment of the financial district; the Tremont-State Streets Area which forms the northern boundary of the Central Business District and the Boylston-Park Square Area which is the link between the Back Bay and the retail core.

The Devonshire-Congress-Federal Streets Area

Office buildings in this part of the Central Business District are used, for the most part, by medium-sized insurance companies, commercial banks, and investment brokerage firms. Although most of the office space to be found here is neither modern nor of an arrangement which is particularly conducive to modern, mechanized banking and insurance operations, it is of the highest quality to be found in the downtown. With the exception of the Blue Cross Building which was completed in 1959, most of the office structures were built within the last thirty years.

Regardless of the fact that this area has not been continually renewed by means of uninterrupted new office construction, it remains one of the most sought after and prestigious locations for downtown offices. Its relative

TREMONT-STATE STREETS
AREA

DEVONSHIRE-FEDERAL-CONGRESS
STREETS AREA

BOYLSTON - PARK SQUARE AREA

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PROJECT AREA

MAP 1 EXISTING OFFICE AREAS



high quality of office space in combination with its proximity to mass transit facilities and the fact that it is the heart of Boston's very stable and growing commercial and financial community make it a prime area for potential new office development.

The Tremont-State Streets Area

Several types of law offices, commercial banks, and investment enterprises make up the office users in this area. Tremont Street is tenanted by both general law offices whose business is most directly related to the Boston Community and to the legal activities around the Court House and Beacon Hill and by a mixture of small sized business enterprises occupying small portions of space in buildings dominated by these law firms. State Street is populated by a small but significant number of investment brokerage houses and by larger law firms which are, in contrast to those along Tremont Street, more related to the investment field and to a clientele whose interests encompass areas larger than and outside that of the Boston Metropolitan Community.

Although both Tremont and State Streets border the retail district and have vital access to mass transit routes, the level of quality of office space located along these two streets differs. Most of the office structures along Tremont Street were built during the era prior to

1890, have ground-floor retail enterprises, and have shared in the general down-grading of Tremont Street as a shopping and business street. State Street, on the other hand, though comprised of buildings constructed between the last thirty and sixty years, has always maintained its prestige as "the" street for the oldest and most reputable law firms and banking and investment houses, strengthened in part by its direct connection with the financial district. The revitalization of this entire area for office-oriented enterprises rests upon overall plans for the retail core with specific reference to Tremont Street and upon strengthening the connection between State Street, the waterfront, and the financial district.

The Boylston - Park Square Area

This area has the most disorganized pattern of office users and the least cohesive range in the quality of office space in the Central Business District. Rather than being dominated by one or two major or several related kinds of office users, this area is occupied by a conglomeration of business representatives, personal service-oriented firms, theatrical agents, dentists, lawyers, advertising firms, and commercial artists. Buildings along Boylston Street and in Park Square were

constructed, in the main, prior to 1890, with the exception of the Little Building and the Statler Office Building.

Although this area is the link between the retail core and Back Bay, in addition to its bordering on the Public Garden and Common, several factors have aided in its general decline as a location for intensive, downtown, commercial activity. Mass transit stops are located on both ends and along the edge of the area, making connections to the center of Park Square and to the heart of the entertainment district indirect. Moreover, this area is located at the edge of the most deteriorated section of the retail core, the garment industry, the blighted South Cove, the southern part of the narrow and somewhat low quality entertainment district, and the least active commercial part of the Back Bay. Because of its general physical condition and its location in relation to other areas of potential renewal, the Boylston-Park Square area constitutes a potential for redevelopment which must be sensitively considered.

III. AREAS OF POTENTIAL OFFICE DEVELOPMENT (See Map II - Potential Office Areas)

The development of any kind of office potential depends ultimately upon a plan for the entire Downtown which is sound both in terms of planning principles and the kinds of investors who will be invited by the plan to revitalize the area economically. This plan must include proposals for a strong retail core, a viable, and varied, and active theatre district, diverse sectors of non-cultural entertainment, a coordinated circulation and parking system, and a mass transportation network which not only serves more points in the downtown and the Back Bay, but which also reaches out to a larger area in the Boston-Metropolitan Region.

Equally important as a plan for the Downtown which embraces the Metropolitan Region as well is the necessity for joining different nodes of activity and making them part of a continuous and well-linked chain of uses, which are related functionally as well as economically. Two means for accomplishing this objective can be used. The first involves making the edges of the Back Bay, the Retail Core, the Financial District, the Waterfront and Government Center active, vital and attractive enough both aesthetically and economically, so that shoppers and business people will be pulled from one node to the

UPPER STATE STREET
AREA

RETAIL CORE

BOYLSTON - PARK SQUARE AREA

DEWEY SQUARE
AREA

GARMENT DISTRICT

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

MAP 2 POTENTIAL OFFICE AREAS

LEGEND

PREDOMINANTLY OFFICE

MIXED OFFICE

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PROJECT AREA

CBD 201

other without any visible break. The second method relates to the first in the sense that a specially designed, low speed, downtown-transportation system must be installed to facilitate communication between longer-than-walking-distance points, therefore making all of these nodes or activity areas part of a formalized band which stretches from Government Center to the Prudential Center and the Back Bay.

The kind of potential areas for office development which will be discussed here are comprised of segments of the Central Business District where structural, environmental and economic conditions are such that new office construction would become a part of an overall plan for redevelopment which would make possible the strengthening and joining together of what are now separated and somewhat devitalized nodes of commercial activity.

There are two kinds of areas in the Central Business District which have potential for future office development. The first is comprised of predominantly office uses, while the second is a mixture of office and other commercial activities.

Potential areas of Predominantly Office Use

There are three areas in the Central Business District which are of and have the potential for the development of predominantly office use. They are the Upper State Street, the Dewey Square, and the Park Square Areas.

1. Upper State Street - For the most part, office development here will probably be either replacement space for existing law firms and other semi-professional services which now occupy space of fair quality in somewhat antiquated structures, or for expansion space for existing commercial banks and investment houses which require large, open floor layouts for modern, mechanized computer systems and storage for records of business transactions and accounts. Very little of this possible office construction is likely to represent a net increase over the total square footage now in existing office use, though Robert Gladstone, economic consultant to the Boston Redevelopment Authority, predicts that at least one new office building comprising one-half million square feet which will add to the existing total will be constructed in this general area.

Development of this sort in this area will serve the objectives of joining Government Center to the retail core and of giving the necessary expansion space to the banking

and investment enterprises which cluster together in the financial district. Possible future users of office space in this area will locate along State Street on the edges of Washington, Devonshire, and Congress Streets in either rehabilitated structures or in new buildings which will be built on sites on which presently deteriorated or vacant structures now stand.

2. The Dewey Square Area - It is possible that the kind of office development which may be realized will be of a kind presently lacking to any great extent in downtown Boston. This area which lies at the base of the retail core, the point between the edge of the garment and wholesale districts, the tip of the financial district, and within direct proximity to South Station, offers advantages to merchandising groups which have manufacturing establishments nearby and which deal in interstate commerce, and to the home offices who have headquarters, plants and research laboratories around the area of Route 128. This kind of development permits the establishment of a home-office-merchandising center not only for firms which now carry on business activities in either downtown Boston or in areas peripheral to the Boston Region, but also for firms who may either wish to begin completely new operations here or to formulate the branch offices of

plants and business firms which have their home bases in other cities.

These new structures may locate at the foot of Summer and Federal Streets or along the Fitzgerald Expressway on Purchase Street. This will permit not only the joining of the retail district with South Station, but it will also establish a band of prestige tower locations visible to the motorist proceeding upgrade on the expressway in a manner begun by the Traveler's Insurance Building. This kind of development will describe the eastern edge of a framework of office structures which will swing along Tremont Street, down State Street and along the waterfront.

3. The Park Square Area - More than in any other area so far discussed, office development here will depend upon renewal and redevelopment action which may occur in bordering areas. Given sufficient impetus from a strengthened retail core, a new area of in-town residential apartments along Tremont and Boylston Streets, a revitalized and diversified entertainment and theatre district, a new hotel and office-convention center - tourist building, and specially designed downtown-oriented transportation system which would link with the Turnpike Extension, a widened cross-town roadway and strategically located parking structures, this area could be developed

for kinds of office uses found nowhere else in the
Downtown.

The Boylston-Park Square Area could become a center for tourists, personal services, and specialized business activities. Travel agencies, a downtown air-bus-railroad ticket and transportation terminal, and small offices for out-of-town business representative could be developed around Park Square in conjunction with either a new hotel or motel and a possibly expanded Statler Hotel. A new or rehabilitated office structure especially designed to house doctors, dentists, lawyers, advertising agencies, and commercial artists and printers' contractors could be provided along Boylston Street to make this part of the Downtown a center also for personal services and specialized business activities. Offices for ticket brokers, theatre agents, and movie distributors could be developed in combination with an upgraded theatre and entertainment district.

Development of this sort, depending upon the kind of action which will take place in the Back Bay, the southern end of the retail core, and in the South Cove Project area will provide the necessary link between the Downtown and the secondary retail and office core in the Back Bay.

Potential Areas for Mixed Office-Commercial Development

Office development in the following areas will be given impetus by the expansion or renewal of other non-office activities. Space which will be provided for offices will serve to house the administrative activities of existing and proposed retail and light-industrial establishments. It will also be used for business services whose rent paying ability will enable commercial activities with somewhat lower profit margins to not only occupy downtown locations but also to rent in what would otherwise be high-rent structures. Office development will constitute a system of a vertical mixing of activities.

There are two areas in the Central Business District in which this kind of office development may occur. They are the retail core and the garment district.

1. The Retail Core - Besides well-organized spacial arrangements which facilitate efficient and profitable retail enterprises, stores in the retail core lack necessary space in which to carry on the administrative functions of records and accounts management. Moreover, related business services and branch offices of commercial and savings banks require both modern work areas and additional banking space. This space could be provided

along Washington, West, Temple, Summer and Franklin Streets in a ground floor and upper floor mix of office with retail activities which would enable both stores and offices to share rent costs on the basis of gross income rather than square footage occupied and still maintain what would otherwise be costly downtown addresses.

2. The Garment-Entertainment District - Garment factories which now occupy inefficient space in the downtown and whose high-overhead operating costs and low profit margins prevent them from financing or renting new structures require more lucrative enterprises to take up the major portion of rent which would be asked in a renewed area. Tenants of this sort could be provided by medical offices related to Tufts, movie distributors and ticket agents, jobbers, contractors, and truck transportation offices.

